

The Role of Trust in International Relations- Examining India's Gujral Doctrine and South Asian Politics

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Abstract : International Relations is a discipline of paradoxes. The State is the dominant political institution, yet little attention has been accorded to why individual countries behave the way they do with the theoretical analysis dismissing the State as a reactionary monolith - thus States either play to "quest for power" or to "systemic" forces. However, States do behave as and are influenced by agents when interacting with international structures as well as with other states. While questions on "competitive power politics" and "trust" have been examined and developed to a fair extent by International Relations theorists in the post 1990s period, their application to the domain of South Asian politics is limited and little research, if any, examines the conduct of foreign policy beyond rational choice. This paper is an initial attempt to marry these theoretical insights with the foreign policy exercised by India especially the case of the "Gujral Doctrine, as one of "non-reciprocal accommodation". Ignoring the view that such a policy move can be viewed as political "feinting" or deception, it is noteworthy that India even made the first move in terms of defining its role as one who "trusts" rather than one who "seeks" to trust, given the country's geo-strategic context and threat perceptions.

Keywords : India's foreign policy, South Asia, social constructivism, English school, trusting relationships, Gujral Doctrine, rationality

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